



About Homesickness...

While your child was counting down the days until he left for summer camp, you were doing a countdown of your own, one tinged with sadness because your "baby" was leaving. On the fourth day of his independence, something strange happened. He called, crying, saying he was homesick and wanted to come home. You prepared yourself for hearing stories about him meeting all kinds of new people and even staying out late, but you never prepared yourself for this.

How Did This Happen?

Don't panic. Homesickness is a very common reaction for a first-year camper to have. Still, not everyone gets homesick. But, keep in mind that even though your child was really excited about this trip, he just moved away from everything comfortable and familiar. Just arrived in a strange place where he may not know anyone. He is living with strangers, trying to find the right words in French to express himself, learning to communicate with others in a new way, eating food that isn't quite home cooking, even if it is delicious French cuisine!

That is a lot of change to manage overnight, but you can rest assured that homesickness is almost always temporary and that on the other side there is a group of professionals that are there for him and that are trained to help him through these emotions, counselors are trained to recognize and deal with symptoms of homesickness !

What is homesickness?

Homesickness is, above all, a normal feeling. It is the natural result of separating from home and loved ones. Almost all children (and grown-ups!) feel homesick when they're away from home, the French children feel homesick too!

What You Can Do

Now, the 500 miles between you and your child feel more like 500,000. "What can I do? I'm so far away," you think. In fact, there's a lot you can do to help.

Here are a few strategies to help your child adjust:

- Validate your child's feelings: He is meeting new people and having many new experiences and may be overwhelmed. The best thing you can do is be supportive, tell him that you understand and agree that it must be hard. Just let him know that you are available if he wants to share these feelings.

- Tell your child that feeling homesick is normal: he may think he is the only one feeling homesick. Let him know that he is not alone. Even the kids down the hall who are always laughing and who seem to be doing great probably have moments when they feel homesick too!

When is it a problem?

Feelings of missing home 90% of the time disappear spontaneously after a few days at camp. Most feelings of homesickness are not problematic until they become a preoccupation. If these feelings of missing home become so strong that making friends, having fun, sleeping, eating, and participating in activities is difficult, something must be done, we will inform you if your child is in this situation

The best remedy: (1) Prevent homesickness at home, before it starts; and (2) Actively cope at camp, if natural feelings of homesickness reach problematic levels.

The best at-home prevention strategies:

Spending practice time away from home, such as a long weekend at a friend's house can definitely help.

The best in-camp interventions for homesick campers include:

- Staying busy,
- Talking with someone, writing letters home
- Remembering that you're not at camp for your whole life-just a few weeks
- Remembering why you chose this camp and all enjoy the fun activities!

Watch out!

The most common mistake parents make is the Pick-Up Deal. It's normal for children to ask, "What if I feel homesick?" Tell your child that feelings of homesickness are normal. But never ever say, "If you feel homesick, I'll come and get you." This conveys a message of doubt and pity that undermines children's confidence and independence. Pick-Up Deals become mental crutches and self-fulfilling prophecies for children as soon as they arrive at camp. Trust your instincts, you can also trust in our experience. The occasional child who is truly not enjoying anything, having a miserable time and not adjusting to camp life at all should be allowed to return home after a reasonable amount of time and efforts.

So, you may receive the first letter from camp filled with words of homesickness, Remember that you picked this camp because you felt confident that they could manage a homesick child. They can!

For a number of kids, **homesickness** can certainly interfere with a successful camp experience. But it doesn' t have to be this way. This should not be a deterrent to sending your child to camp. By following these simple strategies, you can help your child develop the skills needed to combat it. This is important not only for sleep-away camp, but for all separations from home.



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